

# On the Beat

Minneapolis VA Health Care System

November 2013

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“On the Beat” is published monthly for patients, employees, volunteers and friends of the Minneapolis VA Health Care System.

### Editorial Staff

**Ralph Heussner**

*Public Affairs Officer*

**Sandra Wicklund**

*Public Affairs Specialist*

**April Eilers**

*Photographer*

### Comments:

Public Affairs Office 4V-106  
Minneapolis VAMC  
One Veterans Drive  
Minneapolis, MN 55417

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[www.minneapolis.va.gov](http://www.minneapolis.va.gov)



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# VA Psychologist Named Anderson Chair in PTSD Research at U of Minnesota

Brian Engdahl, Ph.D., a professor of neuroscience, cognitive science, and psychology at the Brain Sciences Center at the University of Minnesota and psychologist and clinician investigator at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, has been appointed the Anderson Chair in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Research at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

The Anderson Chair helps understand and heal the psychological scars that often haunt veterans as they return home from service. The \$2 million gift honors the late William Lewis Anderson, a combat medic who died trying to save a wounded soldier on the battlefield in World War II.

Engdahl has served veterans for more than 30 years at the Brain Sciences Center and Minneapolis VA Medical Center and is working on numerous research initiatives to assess and treat veterans with serious disabilities, including PTSD.

“It’s an honor to be named the Anderson Chair in PTSD Research,” said Engdahl. “We hope to continue the great work done at the University of Minnesota and VA Medical Center to help those who served our country but now are afflicted with PTSD and other life altering disabilities.”

With Apostolos Georgopoulos, M.D., Ph.D., and his colleagues at the Brain Sciences Center, Engdahl has recently helped discover that a special kind of brain scan can identify, with 95 percent accuracy, veterans with PTSD. Because this appears to be the first objective marker of a mental disorder, the findings should help develop better kinds of PTSD treatment, encourage more people who suffer from it to seek help, and reduce the stigma associated with PTSD and other mental disorders.

**ON THE COVER:** Andrea Corradi, a graduate of the University of Minnesota and RN in the Minneapolis VA Critical Care Float Pool, gives a heartfelt and enthusiastic description of the honor and opportunity that VA Nursing Academy Partnership students will find in caring for Veterans during reception for 20 U of M nursing students at the VA on Nov.13.



**Dr. Engdahl**



## VA to Open Clinics in Albert Lea, Shakopee

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced on Nov. 8 that Valor Healthcare, Inc. (Humana Government Business) of Louisville, KY, has been awarded a \$28.2 million, 5-year contract to operate two new VA community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) in Albert Lea, MN, and Shakopee, MN. They are expected to open in mid-2014. The new clinics will be located at: 1100 Shakopee Town Center, Shakopee, (Scott County) and Skyline Mall, 1665 West Main Street in Albert Lea, (Freeborn County). The clinics will provide primary care, mental health counseling and telemedicine services. The clinics will be part of the Minneapolis VA Health Care System. The Minneapolis VA currently has CBOCs in Rochester, Mankato, St. James, Maplewood, Ramsey (NW Metro), Hibbing and Ely, MN, and Superior, Rice Lake, Hayward and Chippewa Falls, WI.

### Minneapolis VA Named to Joint Commission's "Top Performers" List

The Minneapolis VA Health Care System (Minneapolis VAHCS) was recently recognized as a top performer on key health care quality measures for 2012 by The Joint Commission, an independent panel that accredits and certifies health care organizations. "We are proud of the medical facilities that have been recognized for demonstrating VA's commitment to provide the high-quality care our Veterans have earned through their service," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "This achievement highlights the hard work of our VA medical staff to serve Veterans." The Minneapolis VAHCS was one of 32 VA medical centers that received the recognition. While all 151 VA medical facilities are accredited by The Joint Commission, the list recognizes facilities that are the top performers based on The Joint Commission's annual review of evidence-based care that is closely linked to positive patient outcomes.



### 100 Graduate from Hennepin Veterans Court

Veterans Court in Hennepin County recently presented a medallion to its 100<sup>th</sup> graduate from the intensive 12-18 month program. In order to graduate, participants must successfully complete court ordered chemical dependency treatment and/or domestic abuse programming, and work with the VA Medical Center or community based resources on other programming as indicated in their case plan. Hennepin County announced the milestone in a November news release. Veterans Court promotes sobriety, recovery, and stability through a collaborative and cooperative effort between the Fourth Judicial District Court, Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation, the VA Medical Center, VA Benefits Administration, and volunteer veteran mentors coordinated through Metropolitan Center for Independent Living. The Hennepin County Veterans' Service Office and Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development also provide direct services to the veterans in this court program.

### Duluth VA Vet Center Scheduled to Move, Staying in City Limits

The Duluth Vet Center is scheduled to relocate to newer and larger offices to better support local Veterans. The current offices, 405 East Superior St. Duluth, MN, will move around March or April of 2014. The new location will be 4402 Haines Road Duluth, MN, with space for four counselors, one program assistant and one Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) Outreach coordinator. The new location will also be staffed by Veteran Work Study Students and Student Interns working toward their graduate level degrees. The Vet Center Program was established by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems. Vet Centers are part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.



## MINNEAPOLIS VA NEWSMAKERS



Dr. Li

### Dr. Jian-Ming Li Named American Heart Association Medical Professional 'Hero' for 2013

The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association has named VA cardiologist Jian-Ming Li one of its 2013 Heart & Stroke Heroes. Dr. Li was honored in the **Medical Professional Category**, which recognizes a Medical Professional whose efforts in the cardiovascular field have helped not only their patients, but the community as a whole. Of his many accomplishments, Dr. Li started a free community clinic in the Twin Cities in 2004 for Chinese, Laotian and Hmong immigrants and currently volunteers as a cardiologist there. He co-organized a symposium at the 2009 AHA scientific sessions which brought together cardiologists and researchers from the US and China to exchange knowledge and ideas for improving cardiovascular care. In 2011, Dr. Li brought together the American Heart Association, the Chinese American Heart Association and the Great Wall International Congress of Cardiology to deliver CPR and Basic Life Support Training to medical professionals in Beijing. A heart attack survivor himself, Dr. Li recognizes that coronary artery disease begins at a young age and therefore he dedicates much of his time delivering educational seminars about heart health to the general public including students at local universities.



Dr. Jackson

### Former VA Staffer Named Dean of U of M Medical School

Dr. J. Brooks Jackson of Johns Hopkins, has been named a new medical school dean and vice president for health sciences. Jackson, who holds an MBA and MD degrees from Dartmouth, served a residency at the U Hospitals from 1982 to 1985, worked at the **Minneapolis VA Medical Center**, and was an assistant professor of laboratory medicine and pathology at the U from 1985 to 1989. Jackson will replace Dr. Aaron Friedman, a pediatrician who was named to the post in 2010 as university President Robert Bruininks was approaching retirement and the medical school was preparing a national search for a dean. Friedman, in turn, replaced Dr. Frank Cerra, who had held the post on an interim basis since 2009.



# Vikings Swap Jerseys for Vets



Punter Jeff Locke



Safety Brandan Bishop and QB Josh Freeman with vet



Center John Sullivan

**Minnesota Vikings rookie punter Jeff Locke started out this season wearing the number 12. Last month, the Vikings signed free agent quarterback Josh Freeman who approached Locke about the availability of #12, which is the number he wore in high school. The agreement for the number swap, Locke's asking price of \$10,000 made payable to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. Compared to what some other athletes have asked for their number, Locke's price tag on #12 of \$10,000 doesn't seem terribly high. But the real story is Locke's idea to give the money to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center to help Veterans. Locke and Freeman visited the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and were accompanied by teammates: center John Sullivan, tight end Rhett Ellison, defensive end Justin Trattou, and safety Brandan Bishop. Minnesota Vikings quarterback Josh Freeman and punter Jeff Locke present a \$10,000 check to the Minneapolis VA . Following the check presentation, the players spent time with hospitalized Veterans. The funds will help the recreation therapy program at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.**



Defensive End Justin Trattou



Nurse Exec Helen Pearlman accepts check from Freeman (c) and Locke





**Ken Porwoll**

## **Ken Porwoll, WW II Veteran, Survivor of Bataan Death March, Long-Time VAMC Volunteer, Dies**

Kenneth Porwoll, a WW II veteran who survived the Bataan Death March and three and one-half years in a Japanese prison camp, died on Veteran's Day surrounded by family at the VA Medical Center. He was 93. In 1939, when Porwoll was a senior in high school, he and his friends joined the Brainerd unit of the National Guard. The unit became Company A of the 194th Tank Battalion. In September 1941, it was shipped to the Philippines. Porwoll was a tank commander stationed at Fort Stotsenburg in the Philippines when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. Seven hours later, the Japanese struck the Philippines. After U.S. and Filipino forces were defeated at the Battle of Bataan, Porwoll was one of some 70,000 prisoners of war forced by the Japanese to march 65 miles in the tropical heat. "I was on the Death March out of Bataan for eight days to San Fernando in 100-degree temperatures and without food and practically no water," Porwoll wrote in an unpublished memoir. He was not freed until the war ended in 1945. For logging almost 5,000 hours at the VA Medical Center, he was presented with the USA Freedom Corps Volunteer Award by President George W. Bush in 2004. He also volunteered as a barber at the St. Paul Listening House, which serves the homeless and underemployed. He was buried on Nov. 18 at Fort Snelling Cemetery. Ken's wife, Mary Ellen, serves on the Minneapolis VA Consumer Advisory Board.

### **NEWS FROM VA CENTRAL OFFICE**

**Smile!**

VA has you covered with the new  
**VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP)**

The VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP) offers dental insurance at a special low rate for Veterans.  
Choose from plans offered by Delta Dental and MetLife.

Enroll now. Coverage begins January 1, 2014.  
To learn more and sign up, contact the dental plans directly:  
Delta Dental: [www.deltadentalvadip.org](http://www.deltadentalvadip.org) or (855) 370-3303  
MetLife: [www.metlife.com/VADIP](http://www.metlife.com/VADIP) or (888) 310-1681

Participants in VADIP pay a fixed monthly premium in addition to any copayments required by the plan. Eligibility for VADIP is limited to Veterans enrolled in VA health care and beneficiaries of VA's Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA). To learn more about eligibility, visit [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP)

**VA** | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration

## **VA Offers Low-Cost Dental Insurance Program**

VA is partnering with Delta Dental and MetLife to allow eligible Veterans, plus family members receiving care under the Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA), to purchase affordable dental insurance beginning Nov. 15. This three-year pilot has been designed for Veterans with no dental coverage, or those eligible for VA dental care who would like to purchase additional coverage. Participation will not affect entitlement to VA dental services and treatment. Apply online at Delta Dental, [www.deltadentalvadip.org](http://www.deltadentalvadip.org), or MetLife, [www.metlife.com/vadip](http://www.metlife.com/vadip) beginning Nov. 15. Coverage begins Jan. 1, 2014. Also eligible for benefits are nearly 400,000 spouses and dependent children who are reimbursed for most medical expenses under CHAMPVA. Participants are responsible for all premiums, which range from \$8.65 to \$52.90 per month for individual plans. For more information, visit [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vadip](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vadip), or contact Delta Dental (1-855-370-3303) or MetLife at 1-888-310-1681.



**Dr. Akhouri Sinha in VA Laboratory**

## VA Studying the Real Killer Behind Cancer

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Article by Deane Morrison and photo by Patrick O'Leary from University of Minnesota first appeared on the U of M "Discover" Website.

This story is short. Not much is known about metastasis. And that's the point.

"Everybody knows that cancer patients don't die from primary tumors," says Minneapolis VA and University of Minnesota prostate cancer researcher

**Akhouri Sinha, PhD.** "It's the metastases that kill them."

Metastasis—the spread of cancer from its origin—is responsible for about 90 percent of deaths from human solid-organ cancer, he says. Many metastasizing cells go to lymph nodes, where cells of the immune system are supposed to seek out and destroy them. Although some metastasizing cells escape to the bloodstream or bones, lymph nodes are so important that the extent to which metastasizing cells have invaded them is used in staging cancers.

After cancer surgery, pathologists examine lymph nodes from near the original tumor. Usually, they report only whether nodes are positive or negative for cancer cells. But there has to be more to the story, because some patients with positive nodes survive a long time, while others die within a few years.

In a new study, published in *Anticancer Research*, **Sinha** and three colleagues looked deeper into what happens in nodes after cancer cells have metastasized there, seeking to explain the difference in survival times. Examining microscope slides of 32 cancer-positive pelvic lymph nodes from prostate cancer patients, they found that in some nodes and in some patients, the immune system seems to be doing its job because they saw dead and dying cancer cells in the nodes. In others, however, the cancer cells seem to have the upper hand; they weren't dying. In other words, they saw two kinds of metastatic tumor cells: those that were at least partially vulnerable to the immune system, and those that were not.

The researchers hypothesize that patients whose nodes show significant cancer cell death will do better than those whose nodes show little or none because that may signal the rise of cells resistant to attack by the immune system. These patients may require more aggressive therapy. **Sinha** suggests that patients with

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 8**

### MINNEAPOLIS VA ONE OF 19 VA RESEARCH CENTERS OF INNOVATION

The Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes Research (CCDOR) at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System has been designated a Center of Innovation (COIN) by VA's Office of Research and Development. Only 19 of the 152 VA medical centers across the country have COINs. "The COIN designation recognizes this medical center's expertise in research on a national level," said Kent Crossley, MD, Minneapolis VA Chief of Staff. The purpose of a COIN site is to foster more timely and relevant research to address the needs of patients and providers. According to CCDOR director Steven Fu, MD, the Minneapolis COIN will focus on PTSD, Cancer Prevention/Screening and Chronic Pain. For more details on the Minneapolis COIN, see: [www.hsrd.research.va.gov/centers/ccdor.cfm](http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/centers/ccdor.cfm).

# Milestones—Congratulations

## 40 YEARS

**Zynthia Haller**  
Nutrition/Food Service

## 35 YEARS

**Derek Zimmerman**  
Engineering

**Craig Cherland**  
Specialty Care

## 30 YEARS+

**Kimberly Burress**  
Specialty Care

**Cheryl Thompson**  
Nutrition/Food Service

**Sheila Collins**  
Pharmacy

**Delroy Crider**  
Nutrition/Food Services

**Danette Bohlken**  
HR

**Frank Grund, MD**  
Lab Medicine

## 25 YEARS

**Carolyn Olivera**  
IT

**Jean Thielen**  
Primary Care

**Daniel Meredith**  
Primary Care

## 20 YEARS

**Wade Baltz**  
Extended Care/Rehab

**Daniel Obrien**  
Specialty Care

**Kim Lowery**  
Mental Health

**Lisa Szumilas**  
Primary Care

## 15 YEARS

**Terri Moore**  
Mental Health

**Alan Williams**  
Environmental Health

**Randall Machalk**  
Primary Care

**June Stengel**  
Pharmacy

**Shannon Johnson**  
Specialty Care

**Jennell Selchow**  
Primary Care

**Terese Kegley**  
Primary Care

**Gail Ruddy**  
Lab Medicine

**David Hensely**  
Police

## 10 YEARS

**Carmen Klin-McKee**  
Pharmacy

**Jennie Jones**  
Pharmacy

**Joe Tieku**  
Rehab

**Erin Miller**  
Imaging

**Pamela Dewolf**  
Primary Care

**Bayabin Medfu**  
Primary Care

**Patricia Rother**  
Primary Care

**Katherine Zimmerman**  
Primary Care

**CANCER RESEARCH — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7** - . . . cancer-positive nodes ask to have their pathologist test to see whether the immune system or the cancer cells appear to be winning the battle in the nodes. (The test is routine in pathology labs.) Armed with that knowledge, their physician may want to adjust their therapy “Our study provides a basis for pathologists to assess the course and fate of metastatic cancer cells in nodes, which may help predict outcomes for patients,” says Sinha, a professor of genetics, cell biology and development and of urology at the University of Minnesota, and a research scientist at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Medical Center. “This approach can be applied to breast, lung, pancreas, colon, and other solid organ cancers.” The researchers are now looking into the survival times of the patients whose lymph nodes they examined to see how survival correlates with the degree of cancer cell death in the nodes. They will also compare the genetic composition of metastatic cells in lymph nodes to those of cancer cells in the primary tumors in order to learn whether a cell’s genetic makeup determines where, and whether, it will metastasize. Sinha emphasizes that the presence of positive nodes is not necessarily a death sentence, nor are negative nodes a sign that one “will live forever.” “Our paper shows that some populations of metastatic cells are [susceptible to immune attack], and others are not,” he says. “This provides a potential explanation for the observation that some patients survive longer, even with metastatic disease.”